

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-16 (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:
a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;

a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and

a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second easing horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein the second horn has an operative position whereby the second horn is in axial alignment with the intermediate pipe segment and a loading position whereby the second horn pivots laterally away from the operative position and the intermediate pipe segment, and wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second easing-horn while the second easing horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof.

18. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus according to Claim 17,~~

An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:

a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;

a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first

horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and

a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second horn while the second horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof, and wherein the first horn is a heat seal horn configured to cooperate with sheet roll stock to form seamed elastomeric tubular casing *in situ*.

19. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 18, further comprising means for forming and sealing planar elastomeric sheet roll stock operably associated with the housing.

20. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus according to Claim 17,~~
An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:

a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;

a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and

a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second horn while the second horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof, and

wherein the first horn axially extends beyond a footprint defined by the housing and the intermediate pipe segment resides substantially within the footprint defined by the housing.

21. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein the intermediate pipe segment and the first horn are configured to serially mount to the housing support structure so that, in position, each is aligned therein to have substantially the same axially extending centerline.

22. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus according to Claim 17,~~
An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:
a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;
a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and
a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second horn while the second horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof, and
wherein the horn rotor assembly has an overall assembled length that includes the assembled respective lengths of the casing horn, pivot head and intermediate pipe segment with the overall assembled horn rotor assembly length being substantially the same as the first horn length.

23. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus according to Claim 17,~~
An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:

a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;

a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and

a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second horn while the second horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof, and

wherein the housing support structure comprises a support bracket disposed on the downstream end portion of the housing, and wherein the horn rotor assembly comprises a support member configured and sized to releasably attach to the support bracket.

24. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 22, wherein the housing support structure comprises at least one mounting clamp that serially releasably attaches the intermediate pipe segment and/or the first horn, the apparatus further comprising a proximity switch configured to cooperate with the pivot head to detect when the casing horn is in an operational position.

25. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein, in operation, the apparatus further comprises a length of seamed tubular elastomeric film held over the outer surface of the first horn and/or a slug of stretchable fibrous casing held over the outer surface of the casing horn.

26. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 17, in combination with a shirred voiding/clipping apparatus, wherein the first horn and the horn rotor assembly are serially

mountable to the housing to selectively output a desired casing to a downstream shirred voiding/clipping apparatus that engages an installed first horn or casing horn.

27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein the first horn and the horn rotor assembly are serially mountable to the housing one in place of the other so that either the first horn or intermediate pipe is in fluid communication with a filler/product pump disposed upstream of the housing.

28. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus according to Claim 17,~~

An apparatus with interchangeable horns for engaging a filler/product pump and supplying elongate casings for encasing products therein, comprising:

a housing having a support structure and opposing upstream and downstream end portions;

a first horn releaseably mountable to the housing support structure, the first horn having a length, an outer surface and an internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, the first horn is configured to direct casing material to travel over the outer surface while product travels through the internal flow channel; and

a horn rotor assembly releasably mountable to the housing support structure, the horn rotor assembly comprising a pivotable second horn with an outer surface and an intermediate pipe segment, each having a respective internal flow channel therein, wherein, in operation, product travels through the intermediate flow channel into the pivotable second horn while the second horn is adapted to allow a supply of casing material to travel over the outer surface thereof, and

wherein the horn rotor assembly pivotable casing horn comprises a pivot head with a coupling member having a semi-spherical profile and a flow passage held in a socket member having a flow passage, the socket member configured to snugly receive the coupling member while allowing the coupling member to pivot relative thereto, and wherein, in a casing material load position, the pivot head is configured to allow the casing horn to angle substantially ~~generally~~ laterally outward out of axial alignment and, in operative position, the pivot head is configured to allow the casing horn to extend in a substantially horizontal axial aligned position.

29. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 28, wherein the coupling member comprises a groove disposed about an outer surface thereof and an O-ring held in the groove, wherein in operative position, the coupling member and socket flow passages are substantially aligned and the coupling member and socket are sealed to direct product through the flow passages into the casing horn flow channel to thereby inhibit product from otherwise discharging from the pivot head.

30-62 (Canceled)

63. (Withdrawn) A system for producing encased products using selectable first and second horns to thereby produce products in selectable different casing types, comprising:

an apparatus having a releaseably mountable first horn that, in operation, is configured to be in fluid communication with a filler pump located upstream thereof, the first horn configured and sized to flow product therethrough and to cooperate with the apparatus to form, seal and/or guide seamed casing material thereabout; and

a releaseably mountable second horn assembly comprising an intermediate pipe segment in fluid communication with a second easing horn, wherein, in operation, the second horn assembly is configured to replace the first horn and be in fluid communication with the filler pump for flowing product therethrough after the first horn is dismounted from the apparatus, wherein the second horn has an operative position whereby the second horn is in axial alignment with the intermediate pipe segment and a casing loading position whereby the second horn pivots laterally away from the operative position and the intermediate pipe segment.

64. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 63, wherein the second easing horn is configured to hold non-seamed casing material thereon and wherein, when in position on the apparatus, the first horn and the intermediate pipe segment have substantially the same axially extending centerline location and both the first horn and intermediate pipe segment are serially statically mounted to the apparatus.

65. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 63, wherein the second easing horn has a pivotable end portion that allows the second horn to laterally pivot outward from an axially extending centerline of the operative position of the second horn.

66. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 64, wherein the second horn assembly comprises a horn rotor with a pivot head having a coupling member and socket configured to allow the second easing horn to pivot relative thereto, and wherein the second easing horn has a load configuration with the second easing horn oriented angularly outward from upstream piping and an operative configuration with the second easing horn oriented substantially horizontally axially aligned with upstream piping.

67. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 66, wherein the horn rotor comprises a support leg attached thereto, ~~and wherein the apparatus comprises a leg support bracket fixed thereto, and wherein the means for mounting comprises mounting the support leg mounts to in~~ the leg support bracket when the second horn assembly is attached to the apparatus.

68. (New) A system according to Claim 1, wherein only one of the first horn and horn rotor assembly is mounted to the housing support structure at a time.

69. (New) A system according to Claim 1, wherein the first horn is statically mounted to the housing support structure and the second horn pivots transversely relative to an axial center line associated with the operative position for reloading the casing material.

70. (New) A system according to Claim 1, further comprising a pump in communication with either the first horn or the intermediate pipe, depending on whether the first horn or horn rotor assembly is mounted to the housing support structure, and wherein the pump is inoperative during the mounting interchange of the first horn with the horn rotor assembly.

71. (New) A system according to Claim 1, wherein, when the respective first or second horn is mounted to the housing support structure in an operative position, the respective horns extend along a substantially common axially extending centerline associated with the flow path.

72. (New) A system according to Claim 1, wherein the second horn pivots between about 15 to 75 degrees away from an axial center line associated with an operative position thereof to move to the loading position.

73. (New) A system according to Claim 63, wherein the second horn pivots between about 15 to 75 degrees away from an axial center line associated with an operative position thereof to move to the loading position.